

# **"To Struggle Means We're Alive"**

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**prisoners speak out on Ferguson,  
Baltimore, and the ongoing  
revolt against the police**



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## **Introductions**

What follows is a series of interviews with and articles by prisoners on the recent wave of Black-led riots, uprisings, direct action, and protest against the police across the US. The conversations and correspondence that resulted in these pieces took place mostly in the spring of 2016, marking some time since the beginning of the 2014 uprising in Ferguson, Missouri. Reflecting on the ongoing rebellions that have reverberated on both sides of prison walls since that summer almost two years ago, the insights and clarity of these pieces feel no less immediate.

This project emerged organically, after trading ideas with several prisoners I've corresponded with off and on as part of a North Carolina (anti-)prison news bulletin. Folks wanted their thoughts on #BlackLivesMatter and the recent riots to be amplified on the outside, as well as to have an avenue to distribute and further these conversations in their facilities. After being immersed in my own way in the insurgencies of the last two years, albeit as a white person, it felt like there was a lack of visibility of prisoners' own thoughts on this struggle, especially the analysis of "social" prisoners who may be actively resisting on the inside but have little of the recognition or activist cred of known political prisoners.

The folks who contributed to this small publication come from a variety of backgrounds, politically, racially, and otherwise. They are Black and Brown and white, gay and straight. The pieces have been minimally edited for spelling and grammar but not content, with the hope of preserving as much as possible the quality of prisoners' voices on the page. Some contributors have chosen to remain anonymous, while others gave their consent to be named. Most of these prisoners are people I've written with for years, though when word of the publication started spreading, I began to hear from people I'd never talked to before, and a couple of these pieces reflect that.

I hope to be a comrade to those behind bars whenever possible, but I am not an "ally" to them, or any other heterogeneous group for that matter. Rather, as an anarchist I've tried to represent myself as transparently as possible politically to those I correspond with, avoiding the dynamic that comes from passively following leadership and instead at times engaging in active debates with people. Sometimes this means actively choosing to work with some prisoners rather than others. Though there is absolutely a (constructive, I hope) variety of political viewpoints represented here, my own affinities are likely made clear.

I should point out that there is an unfortunate shortage of women prisoners' voices in this 'zine. This is primarily due to the proportion of male to female prisoners in North Carolina facilities, where men outnumber women roughly ten to one, though perhaps it is also representative of the strengths and weaknesses of my own relationships. Certainly there is no shortage of rebellious women at NCCIW or most other women's facilities, and there is a strong history of North Carolina women resisting their confinement and subjugation at the hands of the state.

## **"To Struggle Means We're Alive"**

With recent prison riots and strikes in Texas, Nebraska, Michigan, and Alabama, and the widespread hunger strikes that spread through California several years prior, we're living in a time when prison struggles are building intensely. These efforts are primarily being initiated and self-organized by diverse crews of prisoners outside of established activist organizations or networks. Support on the outside has also grown, however, and is currently playing a role in amplifying news of a national prison strike set for September 9th, the 45th anniversary of the Attica uprising.

This surge in activity unfortunately coincides with the increased prevalence of reformist and even "abolitionist" rhetoric among politicians and their loyal opposition in the world of non-profits and esteemed activist organizations. Whatever their intentions may be, if historical precedent serves, these forces will act to preserve whiteness and capitalism by inaugurating new methods of discipline and social control to replace the old.

In this context, I hope that this publication can prove useful to comrades and accomplices on both sides of the wall, that future struggle against prisons will be as impossible to control as it is to contain, and that these prisoners' words speak to others as they have spoken to me.

-anon, NC  
Spring 2016

*“For freedom we want and will have,  
for we have served this cruel land long enuff,  
and we are full able to conquer by any means.”*  
*-correspondence between slaves, 18th century*

*“Those who are locked up  
know better than their jailers  
the taste of free air.”*  
*-Hélène Cixous*

## **"we are a social force becoming aware of its power"**

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*Lanesboro CI*

*Polkton, NC*

I first heard about the anti-police uprisings and #Black-LivesMatter protests from the news and media. What's sad is that it took Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, and Charlotte and other cities to see what's going on in our cities around the world and what the police are doing to Black people and Latino/s. Just look at what happened in Durham to Chuy Huerta. When are we going to realize that change needs to occur in ourselves and society in this corrupt country. Day by day on the news or in our eyes we are subjected to see or undergo police brutality, racism, discrimination, and injustice by the same people whose job it is to protect and serve. Honestly I'm tired of seeing my people get treated like we're inhuman and outcasts, and naturally its bad in the prison system. They feel like because it's not them that they are doing this to, it don't matter. The system don't care about people of color. We're the game to these killers in black and blue uniforms. They either destroy us or put us into Federal, Sate, and County facilities, or try and deport the Latino/as.

I say this because I'm going through all these things at this time. We got to become conscious of what's going on, because Blacks and Latino/as are being targeted and it's clearly time for a change, time to destroy the system of this racist and wicked government, stand up against racism, police brutality, and injustice, fight the powers that be, and make change, because if we don't these things will continue to

happen. As brothers all around the world we need to stand up and come together and protest for every single man and woman. They are going to keep killing us and keeping us in slavery. That's why we need to get all the education and come together on the inside and outside, because we all have somebody we love or who loves us. So let's stop hurting each other and come together to stop these uniformed killers on the outside and in the prison system. That's why we need the people on the outside, to stand by us and to come up with plans for the youth and the people that's getting out of this prison system and are willing to help themselves.

We need society connecting us, not solely with other predominantly white social movements but also with the many people who survive without compromise in this world on fire. We are

not individuals acting on our moral impulses — we are a social force becoming aware of its power. Becoming powerful is a matter of making our story a place to inhabit, of making our story material. We dream in the face of nightmares, not as an escape into an alternative reality but as a weapon to change this one. Because not only do Black lives matter, and Latino/as, but all lives matter. So outside world: the people on the inside of these prisons need your help too, because we are being killed by black and blue uniforms. Just look at what happened to Mr. Michael Kerr at Alexander CI on 3/12/14. We all need help.

**We need society connecting us, not solely with other predominantly white social movements but also with the many people who survive without compromise in this world on fire.**

With Love to the world,  
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## **"a sense of everyone feeling like, 'about time'"**

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*Bertie CI*

*Windsor, NC*

*1. How did you first hear about the anti-police uprisings and #BlackLivesMatter protests in Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, and other cities, of 2014-2015: friends and family; other prisoners, corporate media, and/or radical publications?*

I first heard about the anti-police uprisings and #Black-LivesMatter protests through the media, newspapers, radio, and television. Also it was a discussion that friends and family were having amongst each other about the realer portrayal finally being shown about the systemic injustice within the "justice" system that is built into the thread of our society to the point of being a constant perpetrator of the ills of this society by being based on archaic ideals that

**If I was shocked about anything it was the persistence of the protesters to pursue the issues on the basis of the facts and not be persuaded by the system, either by intimidation or pacifying.**

have nothing to do with justice.

*2. How did you react? What were your initial thoughts and feelings?*

My reaction wasn't shock or disbelief because I've been living this reality for the majority of my life. If I was shocked about anything it

was the persistence of the protesters to pursue the issues on the basis of the facts and not be persuaded by the sys-

tem, either by intimidation or pacifying, to let things go. I started really paying attention, at first I thought it was just another movement where it would be more about the persons/person pushing the movement than the cause the movement was born out of. So I'll say my initial thoughts were, "Here we go again with people trying to come up off the misfortune of others."

*3. There were and are a lot of contradictory and conflicting elements to these protests and rebellions. Right-wing media has used coded, racist language blaming "thugs" and "criminals", while left-wing media and some activists have also at times decried the rioting, blaming it on "outside agitators." Do you have thoughts on these conflicts over tactics and strategy? Do they resonate with debates going on over resistance inside prisons?*

I believe with so many people involved in the issues it is inevitable for there to be conflict on several levels, not only in ideology but strategy, and personal and group agendas. Excluding those that are involved solely just because and not for the cause, I feel like everyone's actions can push the talks into actual steps towards reforms. Throughout history from all groups of people with differing views on tactics against government tyranny there has been debate on the best tactics, so this is not an issue exclusive to our times or this movement. There was always conflicting thoughts on strategy on the same objectives, for every Martin Luther King there was a Malcolm X, every W.E.B. Dubois a Marcus Garvey, and all their actions shaped and pushed reform in their times. No change for the better has ever happened without those two elements. You need the reasonable voice to convey in an articulate way the demands of the movement, and the muscle to show why its best to listen to the voice of reason.



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The commercial and right-wing media is an extension of the ruling party as a tool for propaganda they are doing what they were created for, so it's nothing new about them criminalizing everyone and everything that threatens their views and self-imposed rights to their positions in society. It's all a cointelpro program in progress. I'm pretty sure the British saw the "founding fathers" as "criminals" and "thugs" as well. They revolted over taxes and high-priced tea, much less than the atrocities they commit today against their own citizens and then call "justice." Now there's a holiday around those "thugs'" actions.

*4. Were other prisoners talking about these rebellions, and if so, what kinds of conversations were they having?: Did it stimulate discussion, organizing, and/or resistance in your facility?*

Of course people are in here discussing the rebellions and cheering the resisters on. It's been a sense of everyone feeling like "about time," because those of us who have been living through the reality of the semi-covert, organized hostility towards certain groups of society to see it aired out and picked up by those in a better position to resist with effect gives us a sense of validation and encouragement. It felt as though before this nothing we said against these people would get taken seriously, as if by them being a part of the system of justice they were incapable of injustice, and we were all just sore bitter individuals. Now that people are coming to realize that it can happen to anyone anywhere for any reason, getting wrongly accused and jailed, killed by officers walking anywhere or even sitting in your own home. It's encouraged guys in here to do their part, and due to the fact that we are all convicted felons we know our limitations in the roles we can play effectively, so we embrace the radical and militant part where force may be needed. Even still, we discuss other aspects of the move-

ment and encourage that too, but we just don't want to let the opposition use our past deeds in a propaganda campaign to discredit the movement as a whole. Our position is: we want the establishment to realize that they would rather talk to the "reasonable" organizers than to deal with us. But yes, its caused us to put aside certain differences at times in here to stand together in a common cause.

*5. Did it feel to you like there was a racial dynamic to how prisoners reacted to the news of these mostly Black uprisings? Was there more or less racial unity with regards to anti-police sentiment in the prison? Did it seem like white or Latino/a prisoners could relate?*

Among the Blacks mostly, but other groups as well, it has led to an increased eagerness to learn our history in this society and world. The interest to learn about the Black Panthers, the Deacons for Defense, the American Indian Movement to name a few has rapidly increased. Guys in here study the history of the struggle and are coming to the realization that the past has as much to do with the affairs of today. They are arming themselves with this knowledge and choosing the roles that personally resonate with them and taking action. Yes there are more radical thoughts and actions with unity among the prison population across all racial boundaries in response to the anti-police sentiment. No matter the race, at this level we all relate to the orchestrated oppression of the ruling class with their aggressive, abusive tactics of the enforcement division of that class. We all get beat with the same baton, sprayed with the same mace, and put in the same isolation by the same rules that are all "anti-us." Still, there are pockets of division even in here, with favoritism to certain races depending on the region of the institution.

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*6. What do you think the relationship can or should be between these anti-police rebellions on the outside and resistance inside prisons? Is there resistance or organizing going on at your facility you want to mention or hold up?*

I think society should use the experience of the prison population to educate themselves about the in-the-trenches dirty tactics of the government and police. In order to justify their erroneous actions in pursuit of their objectives of "law and order", and to show the public the need

**It's tricky considering the very macho culture of prison life where your image means everything, which is why we stress that every warrior, soldier, and freedom fighter didn't carry a weapon, sword, spear, or gun.**

for increasing police powers and overbearing presence, they themselves create crime and criminals to pursue. How many of their FBI, DEA, and local vice-squad informants are actually soliciting crime in order to bring down a "crime ring" they orchestrated at the behest of the police with the funding to do it? It's ridiculous. So

yes, the organizers should utilize the guys in prison to get certain vital info based on the actual experience of going through this system at all levels. Not to belittle anyone's experience, cause an injustice is an injustice no matter what, but there needs to be more communication between what they deem as the "hardened criminals" cause they can contribute something that a guy that just spends his weekends in jail for DUI's can't. There needs to be more question-asking such as you're doing.

At the moment myself and a few others are organizing ourselves to educate and direct some of the energy of the

younger prison population in a more constructive manner. We're getting the older ones to pass along the hard learned lessons they've earned through experience by creating an atmosphere that encourages the sharing of views without judgement or reprisal. It's tricky considering the very macho culture of prison life where your image means eve-

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rything, which is why we stress that every warrior, soldier, and freedom fighter didn't carry a weapon, sword, spear, or gun. That's how we will keep pushing, because to struggle means we're alive. When the struggle stops it means you're dead.

**"there seems to be  
little that we can do..."**

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Harnett CI  
Lillington, NC

*1. How did you first hear about the anti-police uprisings and #BlackLivesMatter protests in Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, and other cities, of 2014-2015: friends and family; other prisoners, corporate media, and/or radical publications?*

I didn't find out about the anti-police movements and riots until about a year after they first began because I was housed at a close-custody facility that had removed the newspapers and would change the TV stations to keep us from seeing anything controversial or possibly inciting. I first learned of it after transferring to a medium custody camp that still has newspapers and puts the TVs on the news everyday.

*2. How did you react? What were your initial thoughts and feelings?*

I was shocked at the police actions and their denials and attempts to downplay their actions, or to confer blame to the victims. I have never understood why police are trained to shoot people that are simply running away or are resisting but non-violent. And when they do shoot they are trained only on killshots. There also seems to be at least two standards on how police — even Black or non-white police — react to white suspects versus non-white suspects

for the same types of circumstances. Black teens seem more apt to be shot or manhandled than a white teen of the same age under the same circumstances. And such is not limited to teenagers. The media seems to often imply that even if a Black man was not guilty of an offense then he must have done something to contribute to his getting shot, or injured, or killed, etc.

*3. There were and are a lot of contradictory and conflicting elements to these protests and rebellions. Right-wing media has used coded, racist language blaming “thugs” and “criminals”, while left-wing media and some activists have also at times decried the rioting, blaming it on “outside agitators.” Do you have thoughts on these conflicts over tactics and strategy? Do they resonate with debates going on over resistance inside prisons?*

I am by nature a non-violent person, but it seems, at least partially, that our system of government fails to recognize or acknowledge peaceful protests and that after a point, the only way to have society focus on and address the issue is through “riot” behaviors

(e.g. burning, smashing, etc.)

Of course these avenues also often lead to physical violence and other altercations, both intentional and accidental (See also Occupy Wall Street, or the protests of monetary/financial summit meetings worldwide). Society became inured to protests after the 60’s and 70’s and is now quickly becoming likewise inured to

violence (e.g. The recent Belgium terror attack didn’t even

**These anti-police protests did have one noticeable effect inside the prisons, at least where I’ve been held, and that is that during the height of the conflict our officers seemed to back off of us on the petty things.**

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make frontpage news in some papers). These anti-police protests did have one noticeable effect inside the prisons, at least where I've been held, and that is that during the height of the conflict our officers seemed to back off of us on the petty things. Possibly out of fear of setting off another statewide prison riot? And I even noted some officers opening dialogue with groups of prisoners on the topic, almost as if they were conducting some sort of survey.

*4. Were other prisoners talking about these rebellions, and if so, what kinds of conversations were they having? Did it stimulate discussion, organizing, and/or resistance in your facility?*

Prisoners were definitely discussing these rebellions, mostly holding an agreement that the violence was disproportionately aimed at minorities, and feelings of solidarity towards those outside organizations, though falling short of attempting to organize resistance within the system, I think mostly because of the strict prison regulations against such organizing. Although it should be noted that older prisoners took the opportunity to relate to the younger prisoners about past prison-based resistance movements (e.g. Black Panthers) and giving first person accounts of previous prison riots. Of course, on the opposite side white power-affiliated inmates complained that Blacks were only attempting to get special treatment or really deserved to be shot.

*5. Did it feel to you like there was a racial dynamic to how prisoners reacted to the news of these mostly Black uprisings? Was there more or less racial unity with regards to anti-police sentiment in the prison? Did it seem like white or Latino/a prisoners could relate?*

Which brings us to, yes, there was definitely a pronounced racial split in how prisoners reacted. Whether that is due

to acute racism or to maintaining a front because of beliefs held by groups they are associated with in prison remains to be seen. Though most prisoners seem to feel solidarity with any expression of anti-police sentiments by free world peoples, regardless of race.

*6. What do you think the relationship can or should be between these anti-police rebellions on the outside and resistance inside prisons? Is there resistance or organizing going on at your facility you want to mention or hold up?*

There seems little that we as incarcerated individuals can do to help outside groups besides a limited first amendment approach. Because of prison regulations and restrictions involving inmate petitions, groups, etc. However, the same is not true of our free world supporters in that the first amendment allows them to contact and network with as many prisoners as they are comfortable doing, and our outside supporters have resources that prisoners currently have little to no access to, such as the internet and legal libraries.

There is absolutely no protest activity occurring at Harnett at this time, largely due to the fact that most of these guys are afraid to act up for fear of shipping and losing out on school assignments and the ability to experience a sense of freedom here because of the layout and operations, which allow inmates to socialize regardless of dormitory assignment (ed. note: Harnett CI is a medium custody facility). There is a freedom of movement here which simply does not exist elsewhere, for however much longer it lasts.



## **"To Struggle Means We're Alive"**

*This piece was originally written a year ago, but Saleem was enthusiastic about it being used for this project. One Hood United is a youth movement of imprisoned activists that was inspired by Hip Hop activist Jasiri X's One Hood Movement in Pittsburgh. More information about One Hood United can be found at [www.onehoodunited.org](http://www.onehoodunited.org)*

## **One Hood United: Ganging Up on Oppression**

*by Saleem/One Hood United  
5/4/2015*

*There's an urgent need for the New Afrikan and other oppressed communities to develop new ways of viewing and interacting with "gangs" in our communities. Rather than look upon some of our young people as enemies that we should attack and destroy; we must be mindful that members of "gangs" are our children and grandchildren, our brothers, sisters, cousins - members of our family. We must love them unconditionally; We must protect them and work to help them along righteous paths. Rather than trying to "rid" our communities of "gangs" we should definitely try to assist them as they themselves engage in a process of transformation into community groups that aim to combat some of our real problems.*

*- Owusu James Yaki Sayles, Let's Gang Up On  
Oppression*

Baltimore, MD. The amerikkkan police state was on the ropes in Baltimore as New Afrikan (Black people born in the U.S.) youth took to the streets in a campaign of civil disobedience that forced the city to charge six "police thugs" in the brutal murder of 25 year old Freddie Gray. In an

inspiring display of unity, solidarity protests by demonstrators in Ferguson, New York, Philly, Cincinnati, and Oakland let the world know that Baltimore was not rumbling alone. Let's get it straight, it wasn't President Obama's speeches or retired NFL linebacker Ray Lewis's rants that won the first phase of justice for Freddie; it was the youth and riders of Baltimore's hoods that served notice to the state that they weren't tolerating police abuse and murder anymore. Had the youth in Baltimore not stepped up and put the city under brick and torch, the murder of Freddie Gray by the police would have been written off as "justified" like the previous murders of unarmed New Afrikan youth in Baltimore by the police.

While the youth were bravely rumbling in the streets demanding their life and dignity be respected, another battle was being waged in the media for the narrative of Baltimore. Talking heads within the empire's state-sponsored corporate media were attempting to one up each other in condemnation of Baltimore's Uprising. Sadly, many mainstream Black commentators joined the chorus of condemnation. I'm not going to waste my time discussing the response of mainstream amerikkka, who instinctively believe all New

**My concern is with the "new Negro" commentators who were selling our youth out while they were putting it on the line for justice.**

Afrikan youth are criminals and thugs deserving whatever abuse the police inflict on them. The days of concerning ourselves with the opinion of racist and conservative white folks should be over, although unfortunately many New Afrikan misleaders haven't awoken to this fact. My concern is with the "new Negro" commentators who were selling our youth out while they were putting it on the line for justice.

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At a time when our youth are carrying on the mantle of civil disobedience and fighting injustice in the streets, our so-called leaders should be declaring unequivocal support for the youth. Instead, we sadly heard many of our misleaders condemn the youth for venting their righteous and justified anger at the police, and although the looting and arson were unfortunate, let's put this picture in context. Watching the rebellion from the lens of the media, you would have thought Baltimore was being burned to the ground. The reality, according to the Baltimore police, is that there

**The youth knew what they were doing and for the most part who they were targeting. Many of the vehicles set ablaze were either abandoned cars or police vehicles, or were positioned strategically at intersections to prevent the police from speeding through the streets...**

were 15 buildings put to the torch during the uprising and 144 vehicles set on fire. It should be noted that many of the buildings set on fire were businesses; no row-houses were set ablaze. A couple liquor stores were looted and burned out, along with a CVS drugstore. Again, I'm not even going to waste time lamenting the destruction of a liq-

uor store in an impoverished and disenfranchised neighborhood. The suspicious fire that destroyed the low income senior home and received a lot of media coverage and condemnation happened miles from the epicenter and perimeter of the uprising. There were no crowds or groups of people protesting on the streets in this section of the city.

Far from being an out of control riot, the youth knew what they were doing and for the most part who they were tar-

getting. Many of the vehicles set ablaze were either abandoned cars or police vehicles, or were positioned strategically at intersections to prevent the police from speeding through the streets in dangerous convoys, as was shown on CNN. Burning vehicles were also placed at intersections to keep marauding police out of the neighborhoods. The youth were sending a message: they didn't want an unaccountable police presence in their territory and they could control their own neighborhoods.

Our youth are tapping into a long history of resistance, rebellion and civil disobedience within our community. The torch and fire have long been tools our youth have used to challenge injustice. The rebellions of New Afrikan communities and cities in 1919 and especially 1968 (following MLK's Assassination) are examples of this legacy. The old slaves today who continue to lament that we're only burning our own neighborhoods down need to study the history of our people, the people they claim to represent. During slave uprisings, our ancestors torched not only the plantation but also the "slave quarters/cabins" where they lived. The whites couldn't understand why they would burn their own quarters out. The reason

**During slave uprisings, our ancestors torched not only the plantation but also the "slave quarters/cabins" where they lived. The whites couldn't understand why they would burn their own quarters out.**

they did it is because it wasn't theirs. They didn't feel a part of the social contract or society at large. For the most part, it is no different today within impoverished and disenfranchised communities. Today, when we burn out and destroy the neighborhoods we are "contained" in, it is because we

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know we are not part of this society and have been written off.

The intelligence of men who place themselves in between our youth and battalions of riot police in lines of human chains has to be called into question, along with men who would defend liquor stores from the torch. If you are defending youth from the police then why the hell is your back to the police? If you are defending the youth, then do an 'bout face and face down the police in a human chain. It is the youth who must be protected from disproportionate police violence — from police in body armor and riot gear who would open fire with smoke canisters, tear gas or riot batons because a protester tosses a water bottle or rock at them. Although the intentions of the men who form these human chains are well meaning, the perception they are creating is that it is the police they are protecting and it is our youth who are the problem. The media exploits this perception. We need the men and women of our communities to stand in solidarity with the youth protesters and make it clear to the police that disproportionate police violence against them will not be tolerated. We need strong men and women defending our youth and we want our leaders in the streets doing the same. Too often our youth are being led by misleaders more interested in photo-op politics instead of the actual pursuit of Self Determination, Freedom and Sovereignty. This is why when we take to the streets we are not only combating the state but also well intentioned members of our communities.

We are now entering a potential new phase in New Afrikan youth insurgency and we must be prepared for the state's counterinsurgency campaign, which will be waged today by "New Negroes" and amerikkkan state-sponsored and corporate media outlets. We got a glimpse of the counterin-

surgency campaign in the Baltimore Uprising. In the week preceding the uprising, the Baltimore Police Department sensed public opinion was going against them and put out a false report that the major street organizations — the Bloods, Crips, and BGF — had set aside their differences to target police. The police hoped to paint themselves as victims under fire from dangerous gang members to divert attention from the fundamental issue of police brutality. The diversion backfired as no police were targeted for murder by the street organizations. The street organizations didn't take the bait.

In fact, there was a truce, according to Dr. Heber Brown, pastor of the Pleasant Hope Baptist Church, who serves as a mediator with youth organizations. However, the truce was not about targeting police; it was about halting youth violence in Baltimore. This is a city that averages five so-called “Black on Black” murders a week and over two hundred a year. Our leaders must support any truce that diminishes youth violence in our neighborhoods.

The youth organizations should be commended for observing a truce and instead of the community misleaders isolating them and condemning them they should be embracing them and legitimizing them. The youth should be commended for taking to the streets in a campaign of civil disobedience in defense of their communities. The so-called gangs have shown that they have the power and it is within their ability, not the police or state, to end the violence in our communities. The next step for the youth is to move from rebellion to revolution and to start putting programs in place that secure our own neighborhoods. Street organizations, with the assistance of credible activists, should start establishing “safe corridors” in the hoods for the people that ensure their protection from street vio-

lence "drug free" playgrounds and streets, as well as "Cop Watch" programs. They should consider adopting the code of conduct for gang members advocated by the late Tupac Shakur (available at: <http://www.assatashakur.org/forum/open-forum/9011-code-thug-life.html>). They should also

**The street/youth organizations in Baltimore today are walking in the example of the street organizations who came together after the 1992 LA Rebellion and built a lasting truce between the Bloods and the Crips.**

designate credible activists and former "gang members" as mediators for territorial disputes and personal beefs. They should have procedures in place to mobilize and take the fight into the streets to get justice in instances of police brutality and to mobilize rallies against mass

incarceration and other internal threats to our neighborhoods. The youth and street organizations must become, in the words of Assata Shakur, "shields that protect our communities and spears that penetrate its enemies." They must also know that the objective of any uprising must be control over our communities and the liberation of our territory.

The street/youth organizations in Baltimore today are walking in the example of the street organizations who came together after the 1992 LA Rebellion and built a lasting truce between the Bloods and the Crips. So-called gangs did the same thing in Watts in 1965 following the Watts Rebellion. The reason police and the state fear gang truces is because once gangs stop fighting each other and terrorizing their "hoods" they will wake up to who the real criminals are and start challenging the state for power over their own "hoods." Huey Newton, the founder of the Black Panther Party, said the Party was born out of the ashes of the Watts

Rebellion. The street organizations of Baltimore and other “hoods” should be encouraged to resurrect the example of the Black Panthers and Black Liberation Army from the ashes of Baltimore and to rebuild the New Afrikan Liberation Movement. Comrades within the kamps should take a lesson from the youth of Baltimore and put all set and territorial differences to the side to rebuild and contribute to a new era in New Afrikan liberation and to join the struggle in the streets. To make this a reality they should get on deck with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement’s *Let Your Motto Be Resistance* campaign to seize control of our neighborhoods (available at: <https://mxgm.org/let-your-motto-be-resistance-a-handbook-on-organizing-new-afrikan-and-oppressed-communities-for-self-defense/>). They should also check out The New Afrikan Community Security Protocol Mandate by Bro. Abdul Olugbala Shakur (available via [akilishakur@gmail.com](mailto:akilishakur@gmail.com)).

At the end of the day, from Ferguson to Baltimore, from Philly to Oakland, We are: One Hood United!



## **"we can all relate"**

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*Marion CI*

*Marion, NC*

*1. How did you first hear about the anti-police uprisings and #BlackLivesMatter protests in Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, and other cities, of 2014-2015: friends and family; other prisoners, corporate media, and/or radical publications?*

You know, coming from the class of the "proletariat" you relate to all the above uprisings, because oppression, capitalism/imperialism does not discriminate against one certain nationality! As long as the tyrant can exploit us Blacks, Browns and poor white class we are the same to them! So when such organizations such as #BlackLivesMatter stand firm against these murdering pigs we can all relate, so we look through newspapers, etc. for the uprisings. Because it fills those with consciousness with pride to know someone is out there standing up for those who are unable to do so and those who are unconscious. Being held as a captive within the gulags of these "razorwire plantations," access to every detail of the marches, riots, and takeovers is very limited, and if you are conscious then nine out of ten times you are going to be housed on a control housing unit, where you are locked in a cell 24-7 where you only have a radio with stations controlled and that promote capitalism/imperialism. So without the *Bay View* paper we would all be in the dark about the actions taken by the people. But *BayView* can only expose so much due to certain guidelines they must follow, being that they are considered a national paper. Whoever is reading this missive: We the conscious

in bondage within the gulags of these Razorwire Plantations need to come together and form a newsletter to bring awareness to the comrades within these walls, as well as those who are not. We are silenced by mail censorship, limited access to organization that can be our voice, because our lives matter also! We are only limited to what we limit ourselves to.

*2. How did you react? What were your initial thoughts and feelings?*

See, when being a victim of oppression, repression, and fascism, and you hear or witness any form of revolt it fills you with joy, pride, and the desire to unite and revolt yourself against any form of oppression you may be facing at the time. That's why the administration the "overseers" of these plantations try to keep those of us who are conscious on lockdown, because they fear we will unite

**When being a victim of oppression, repression, and fascism, and you hear or witness any form of revolt it fills you with joy, pride, and the desire to unite and revolt yourself against any form of oppression you may be facing at the time.**

with other prisoners and riot. When you love the people, and you see the oppressed people stand up it makes you so happy, because they are a reflection of you. So with my fist in the air I say this with pride, continue on and its all power to the people.

*3. There were and are a lot of contradictory and conflicting elements to these protests and rebellions. Right-wing media has used coded, racist language blaming "thugs" and "criminals", while*

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*left-wing media and some activists have also at times decried the rioting, blaming it on "outside agitators." Do you have thoughts on these conflicts over tactics and strategy? Do they resonate with debates going on over resistance inside prisons?*

You see fables such as these placed on the proletariat since the early 1400's. When a nationality or a group resists and revolts against the fascist ideology, they call us savages, thugs, criminals, etc. See the media uses those titles to brainwash the public, to make the public believe what the protesters and freedom fighters are doing is for their own personal gain. So if they call us these names then it places a negative image on us, so the unconscious will not support the move. For many years the media has been used to the advantage of the capitalist-imperialist. There is not a group of resistance nowhere right now in the State of North Carolina's plantations because 90% of these guys suffer from "Stockholm Syndrome." The ones that are conscious, they separate us. It's known facts that the capitalist uses any bad situation for their advantage.

*4. Did it feel to you like there was a racial dynamic to how prisoners reacted to the news of these mostly Black uprisings? Was there more or less racial unity with regards to anti-police sentiment in the prison? Did it seem like white or Latino/a prisoners could relate?*

See here in NC's plantations, racism is not an issue. Yes, there are some that are racist and you have some racist groups, but they keep to themselves. Like I said, nationality does not matter when it comes to the lower class we are all one class, and we have nothing to lose but our chains. So regardless of skin color if you are of the lower class you can relate because we can feel their pain.

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*5. What do you think the relationship can or should be between these anti-police rebellions on the outside and resistance inside prisons? Is there resistance or organizing going on at your facility you want to mention or hold up?*

Sekou Odinga stated the USA would have you believe that I am a criminal, that we are all criminals. That just isn't so: I am a POW and we have an absolute right to fight for our freedom. That is a human right. That is not a right you have to ask or beg for. Like all people that want to be free, what is necessary to exercise that right is to stand up like a man or woman and exercise it. If it calls for fighting, then we fight!

I myself will continue to fight for the people, as well as myself, regardless of relationship with those on the other side of the razorwire. Should there be a relationship? Very much so. There are many conscious political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and many more that could give so much insight to these anti-police groups, because he has fought the fight and still is fighting. But once we get behind these walls we are forgotten. Companionship is the basic need of human nature, for without it man becomes disturbed mentally, physically, and emotionally. How can they forget about us when we are victims of what these organizations are fighting against!? Before I bring this to an end I would like to mention the United Panther Movement and quote some words from Kevin Rashid Johnson: "Racism is not going to go away, nor is repression, nor the continued cycles of mounting crises created by the capitalist-imperialist system. These can only be ended by proletarian socialist revolution." As a member of the White Panther organization I'd like to say this with my fist in the air: Dare to struggle, dare to win!

## **“To Struggle Means We’re Alive”**

*Will Anderson is an elder in the Federal system who runs a prison literacy program for and with other prisoners.*

### **“going back to basics”**

*Will Anderson*

*Federal Correctional Institution-2*

*Butner, NC*

*1. How did you first hear about the anti-police uprisings and #BlackLivesMatter protests in Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, and other cities, of 2014-2015: friends and family; other prisoners, corporate media, and/or radical publications?*

Every morning weekdays I watch *CNN* news and *TV One* news, and Ronald Martin (Black news mainly) about police murdering Blacks, protests, BlackLivesMatter movement, news on sentence disparities and gun laws. Also newspapers: Nation of Islam’s *Final Call* and the *Bay View* (San Francisco, CA).

**My thoughts kick in and say, “Here we go again, they did it again.” Lying, shooting an innocent Black man.**

*2. How did you react? What were your initial thoughts and feelings?*

My thoughts kick in and say, “Here we go again, they did it again.” Lying, shooting an innocent Black man. Policemen inventing false reports and fabricating their own story to justify their action as a cover-up for wrongdoing. Finally, corruption at its apex as criminals in a corrupted political system!

*3. There were and are a lot of contradictory and conflicting elements to these protests and rebellions. Right-wing media has used coded, racist language blaming “thugs” and “criminals”, while left-wing media and some activists have also at times decried the rioting, blaming it on “outside agitators.” Do you have thoughts on these conflicts over tactics and strategy? Do they resonate with debates going on over resistance inside prisons?*

First, let me inform you that at least 85% of federal prisoners are government assistants, or straight up rats, slang for snitches and defectors. Being in BOP over 20 years, I have seen it all and now am shockproof about what these so-called fed prisoners won't do, or prison officials. It's all about securing and controlling the inmates' behavior to their best advantage with behavior modification methods: pacification, reward and punishment, divide and conquer tactics, and last, inmate informants. The number one tactic BOP uses is “divide and conquer” to keep the uneducated thugs, gangs, religious groups in fear of coming together for any common cause. Racism is understood in BOP by nationality, religion, gang, and geography (city and state) location. Finally, most federal prisoners done lost contact with society only to be with incarcerated minds: sex fantasies, homosexuality, drugs, gambling, working in the Uni-Con factory, and sport and play. Ask anything about current events and most cannot elaborate because they don't read the newspapers, nor watch the daily news or world news for social enlightenment. The living dead! In most FCI's [federal correction institutions] there is no resistance, only submission and passivity and gratification.

*4. Were other prisoners talking about these rebellions, and if so, what kinds of conversations were they having?: Did it stimulate discussion, organizing, and/or resistance in your facility?*

## **"To Struggle Means We're Alive"**

At FCI-Butner we have few conscious individuals that are politicized and are concerned about the law and order being given to people of color under white supremacist, privileged society. We have one group, a religious gang, known as the Nation of Islam with about 8 members that shows concern at their religious services. We do not have group discussions or dialogue about America's corrupted system, nor the criminal political injustice system. Normally, we just follow the news entertainment report in the moment, and its done tomorrow until the frontline, headline breaking news. Finally, there is no resistance here whatever. I estimate that we have about 75% misfits, undesirables, rats, government assistants--where they not trying to make any noise while living in protective custody. The others here are DC prisoners, those in here for medical reasons, and those about to get released within 18 months. I have a few old timers I dialogue with throughout the week about courts, police corruption, Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, terrorism and the bombing of innocent people under the pretext of Islam, from what I gather off the news.

*5. Did it feel to you like there was a racial dynamic to how prisoners reacted to the news of these mostly Black uprisings? Was there more or less racial unity with regards to anti-police sentiment in the prison? Did it seem like white or Latino/a prisoners could relate?*

Prisoners incarcerated in the Feds are no longer politicized Black, White, Brown, Latino, Mexicans as the BOP has modified their thinking to cease to think as individuals, with fear, pacification, modification programs, and divide and conquer tactics that eliminate unity among prisoners. BOP's goal is to keep them dumb, quiet, and obedient.

*6. What do you think the relationship can or should be between these anti-police rebellions on the outside and resistance inside prisons? Is there resistance or organizing going on at your facility you want to mention or hold up?*

There isn't any organization I wish to support or hold up right now in the Feds, including the Nation of Islam — talking loud but saying nothing and doing nothing to bring about action or resolution.

When police kill innocent people it is warranted by the people to be rebellious. It didn't just start in the 2000's, its a reflex going back to 1900's through the 80's etc. There can not be a relationship with po-

lice. Policemen must protect elites and their property, and maintain law and order dealing with the underprivileged people. What I have perceived being locked up over 20 years is that we are back to basics: educate people to learn socially, politically, and economically.

**Real talk, [we need] education, going back to basics for prisoners: reading, studying, research and thinking for themselves as leaders.**

I hope my answers share some light and what time it is. Real talk, [we need] education, going back to basics for prisoners: reading, studying, research and thinking for themselves as leaders, and not being dumb-followers to be manipulated by others' negativity. These street gangs got be checked because they serve no realistic purpose, but death and destruction both outside and inside prisons, with no real objectives setout against the establishment!



*The following prisoner is an organizer with and member of the NC prison chapter of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (not to be confused with the New Black Panther Party). Writings of that party can be found at [rashidmod.com](http://rashidmod.com)*

## **Ferguson, Baltimore, New York, Cleveland**

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*Marion CI*

*Marion, NC*

It was a beautiful sight to see the people in Ferguson, Baltimore, New York, Cleveland, and Philly, along with Oakland, protest about the recent and ongoing police brutality vic-

**As I sat in the day-room of a prison industrial complex, my eyes couldn't hold the hefty tears that were streaming from my eyes, down my cheeks.**

timizing Black Afrikan men. People of all ethnic backgrounds came together to be in solidarity with the beautiful Afrikan brothers who was murdered by the police. They sang spiritual

songs, held hands, and chanted slogans of "Hands up, Don't shoot" and "No Justice No Peace." As I sat in the dayroom of a prison industrial complex, my eyes couldn't hold the hefty tears that were streaming from my eyes, down my cheeks. Anger started to set in. I was supposed to be marching with my brothers and sisters, protesting and holding up signs. I was supposed to be on the frontline with them when things turned ugly. This is what I signed up for. A true revolutionary cries when his people struggle for justice. It's not a sign

of weakness, it's a sign of love and happiness. Many times did I think about going on hunger strike to be in solidarity with my brothers and sisters, to show them, the institution and the world that I struggle with them. Many times did I envision that I avenged the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Freddy Gray and Trayvon Martin, not to mention the Latino and Afrikan men who died at the hands of the pigs in my home State of California. Day after day, I made sure that the TV was stationed on CNN and was very attentive to every word each reporter reported.

Then in Ferguson, a revolt broke out. Pigs' cars were overturned and many buildings and police cars set ablaze, and joy rushed through my veins. The "revolution had been televised" in Ferguson, Missouri. When a person or persons, group or nation of people gets tired of being oppressed constantly by the fascist government that controls its nation, they revolt. My people are tired. They are fed up with getting hunted by the police and living in a community with no jobs, poor schooling and poverty.

**Pigs' cars were overturned and many buildings and police cars set ablaze, and joy rushed through my veins.**

Some say many cadres of "agent provocateurs" from the outside "agitated" the people of Ferguson, but it was not them, it was the police. The police showing up in camouflage uniforms, driving armored vehicles and carrying big guns agitated the people. How can a policeman say that he's there to protect the community and serve the people wearing battle dress uniforms looking like they are ready for war? That not only angered the people but proved to the community that the police were at war with Black people.

## **"To Struggle Means We're Alive"**

In a New York borough called Staten Island, the same thing happened to Eric Garner. He was murdered by the same pig who continuously harasses him on those streets, being a bully and trying to exert his authority, being the repressive and oppressive pig he was bred to be. So what if Eric Garner was selling a loose cigarette. That did not give that pig the right to jump on his back and strangle him. That pig wanted to kill him. On the video that officer used a chokehold that was deemed "illegal" in the State of New York. Many people tried to downplay the whole situation by saying that Eric Garner was a criminal and he was engaged in criminal activities prior to his death. Eric Garner was not a criminal in my eyes, he was a provider for his family. He wasn't selling crack, marijuana or any other drugs. He wasn't selling stolen goods, any firearms, just a measly cigarette. If the government of New York would stop criminalizing Afrikan and Latino men then maybe he could've gotten a better job or a better hustle. He wouldn't have to stand on the corners of streets selling cigarettes, he could've been making an honest living. The system is so bent on bringing the Afrikan man down that it's ridiculous. I felt his mother and his wife's pain, but I couldn't understand his daughter. She gets on national television and says that she wants peace, and proclaims that her father would want peace. Her father died in anguish, he died over a damn cigarette! Then she goes on to say that the police are good individuals and blah blah blah. Well, the good pig just took your father's life!

One thing for certain, the killing of Black unarmed men by police continued to happen. It became an epidemic and spread to cities in every coast. The next cop killing of an Afrikan man on the east coast was in South Carolina, then in Baltimore, Maryland.

The tragic death of Freddy Gray rocked Baltimore. The second Afrikan man to get murdered by the police in a year. I knew the police had killed him because I personally witnessed many occasions in Baltimore, where many Afrikan men were beaten by Baltimore's finest swine. I stayed in Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, DC, and know exactly what those brothers go through. When Freddy Gray's death became breaking news, I wasn't surprised because this was nothing

**The Baltimore revolt reminded me of the Palestinians. They threw rocks in protest like the Palestinians during political conflicts.**

new. The Baltimore revolt reminded me of the Palestinians. They threw rocks in protest like the Palestinians during political conflicts. When the Crips, Black Guerilla Family and Bloods proposed a truce and decided to unite to go against our common enemy, this was beautiful but late. In Los Angeles where I lived, many Crips and Bloods had already united and joined political cadres like the New Black Panther Party, founded years ago by Khalil Muhammad, or the Republic of New Afrika. I was proud of the brothers for standing for a greater cause and in solidarity with the struggle.

What I didn't like about the Baltimore scene is that the Afrikan men and women who were in prestigious positions in the city and state governments complaining about the social/economic problems of Baltimore. These people are the Congressmen, Councilmen, lawyers and pastors. They have the position and the authority to propose bills and send them through legislature to be passed. These people are community leaders who could form petitions and give them to the government. Why did they wait until Freddy's death to complain about these problems in Baltimore?

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They have a Black mayor, Black congressmen, Black district attorney, what's the problem? All of these person were democratically elected. Instead of them trying to capitalize off of the community, they should've been making formal requests regarding these issues. They let the people of Baltimore suffer instead. Also, when CNN's own Wolf Blitzer was reporting on the Baltimore revolt, the only subject he seems to care about is the burning of the CVS building. They talked about the city destruction as if it couldn't be repaired. They talked about the looting and stealing as if Freddy Gray just didn't get his life robbed by those crooked cops. The city can repair those building and many domestic and foreign investors, but the city can't repair Freddy Gray, Mike Brown, nor Eric Garner's lives. To me it seems that Black lives don't matter but capitalist institutions like the CVS do.

# “I can’t even successfully lie to myself”

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*Swannanoa CC*

*Black Mountain, NC*

I would usually be the first to proclaim, “ALL LIVES MATTER,” in my self-deluded effort to eliminate color lines, but the statistics rise to contradict me. The number of African Americans that have fallen victim to police-related shootings and violence so far overshadows all other races combined so that I can’t even successfully lie to myself. In our society that lives in fear of the ever present threat of terrorism, African-Americans and Native Americans have been subject to domestic terrorism from the dawn of this nation.

As long as power and authority have existed, they have been abused. Police killing people isn’t some new phenomenon with a market freshly cornered by young and inexperienced

officers. This is their culture and it is to a large extent accepted, standard operating procedure. Until the advent of our new digital age, the system was built on their word versus ours, with ours not counting for much. Now the tables are turning because technology is providing the irrefutable proof that our testimonies lacked. From unarmed men gunned down in cold blood, to children being appallingly

**As long as power and authority have existed, they have been abused. Police killing people isn’t some new phenomenon with a market freshly cornered by young and inexperienced officers. This is their culture...**

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abused by officers in their schools — the word of authority is no longer gospel. While not all officers are evil and there remain shining exceptions that seek to serve the interested of their communities, there is an undeniable problem with any organization that, by either omission or commission, allows for monsters in their ranks.

I wish I could tell you there were some major discussions or resistance in my prisons but I can't. I've spent 7 1/2 years in the midst of a sociological experiment gone horribly awry. I have met only a precious handful of socially conscious individuals over the course of my incarceration. Many of these women have never voted and would continue to do so without knowledge or regard of how many Afri-

**What I want the public to know is how tragically young many of the women in prison are, Black women especially.**

can Americans and women fought for the rights of future generations, our generations. What I want the public to know is how tragically young many of the women in prison are, Black women especially.

These girls have been failed by all the social systems, the public school system, and finally by the criminal justice system, simply shuffled through from one to the next with a lack of concern that is criminal in itself.

At NCCIW, which is the large maximum security women's prison in Raleigh, there is no cable television and mail and magazines are closely monitored. We were frequently denied material that they thought might incite or inspire, and any correspondence they deemed questionable. I like to think that the lack of interest in any of the revolutionary movements stemmed from a simple lack of information, but maybe that's just what I like to think.

*Michael Kimble is a 49-year old Black, gay anarchist serving a life sentence for the murder of a homophobic, racist bigot. He has a blog and has been an active voice among prisoners at Holman correctional facility in Atmore, Alabama, where there have recently been several riots, as well as strikes in conjunction with the Free Alabama Movement. You can read more writings from him at [anarchylive.noblogs.org](http://anarchylive.noblogs.org)*

## **Reflections and Reminiscence on the Murder of Mike Brown**

*Michael Kimble  
Holman CF  
Atmore, AL*

While in segregation listening to the radio news report, it was reported that a young Black male by the name of Michael Brown had been shot and murdered by a Ferguson, Missouri kop. A blind rage came upon me, but being in segregation, in a single cell consisting of brick and steel, there wasn't much I could do to express my outrage adequately. See, I'm an anarchist who has been locked down for a long time and have been the victim of brutality of kops my entire life. My first time seeing a kop as a child was when my mother got into a physical confrontation with a kop as a child was when my mother got into a physical confrontation with them. All my life I've seen my family members, friends, and strangers suffer brutality from the kops.



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tation with them. All my life I've seen my family members, friends, and strangers suffer brutality from the kops, even murder. I've never had a positive encounter with the kops.

Anyhow, I waited another hour for the news to come back on the radio to make sure that I had the details correct. After hearing again that Michael Brown was shot, I hollered through the vent to the guys in the cells above me and told

**As others got the news, they started beating on doors, screaming "Fuck 12!" and all kinds of shit. Eventually comrades on the outside started sending me reports in the mail on the riots, and as I shared them with others, guys started attacking the CO's.**

them to turn on their radio. After a few minutes of quietness to allow them to find a news report of Mike's murder, like me they expressed their rage by stating that someone needed to start retaliating against the kops when they murder one of us. Throughout the night we chopped it up about our frustrations with the Black organizations and gangs out there not retaliating

and only marching, and the family suing the police departments for monetary damages, when it's evident that it's no deterrence to the killing of Black, Brown, and poor whites.

When the riots popped off, the way it was being reported made me think that just maybe Black folks had had enough of this bullshit. That this was the beginning of the revolution. A couple of others here expressed the same sentiment. That finally some pigs were going to do some dying and not us alone. And the guys above me shared my thoughts, but then we began to talk about what it would take other than taking out some pigs. I won't go into the plans for future

actions we came up with.

Anyhow, as others got the news, they started beating on doors, screaming “Fuck 12!” and all kinds of shit. Eventually comrades on the outside started sending me reports in the mail on the riots, and as I shared them with others, guys started attacking the CO’s with feces and piss, a common tactic of warfare in the lockup. Fireballs of paper and clothing was being thrown off the top two tiers.

After receiving more literature of what was going on, like the Nation of Islam and New Black Panther Party telling the sistas to get off the streets and trying to quell the rioting, I became disheartened because we keep allowing these poverty pimps to turn potential insurrectionary moments into the same old bullshit reformist direction.

As a matter of fact, at this moment [May 2016] we are on workstrike here at Holman Prison here in Alabama, and just today we had a gang leader state that we need to leave the CO’s alone and keep things nonviolent. But he turned right around thirty minutes later and held a beatdown on another gangmember. No violence against the pigs, but its OK against each other. A pig sent him [to our unit] because since we’ve been on strike they’ve cut back on our food portions, and it was stated that if it keeps up, there was going to be some actions.

See, the same recuperative methods used in the streets is being used in the prisons. But I can say that the riots in Ferguson have inspired a lot of the actions in here, because whenever there’s a planned action Ferguson and Mike Brown’s murder is mentioned as examples of the oppression that Black folks suffer in the good old USA.

## **“To Struggle Means We’re Alive”**

*The following interview was conducted with Luke O’Donovan, a young white man imprisoned for using a knife to defend himself against a gang of homophobic attackers during a party in Atlanta, GA. He is due to be released from prison in late July 2016. You can learn more about his case at [letlukego.org](http://letlukego.org)*

### **“to storm all the bastilles”**

*Luke O’Donovan  
Washington State Prison  
Davisboro, GA*

*1. How did you first hear about the anti-police uprisings and #BlackLivesMatter protests in Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, and other cities, of 2014-2015: friends and family; other prisoners, corporate media, and/or radical publications?*

Yeah, it was friends and family. The day I went in, I think, is the day Ferguson started. And so first I heard about it on the phone talking to people, and then, maybe even the day before I went in. But people from St. Louis were sending me write-ups on stuff that was happening and keeping me well informed. And I was talking to friends.

*(Was news of that also making it into the facility by radio or TV?)*

Yeah, but it didn’t feel like a big deal at that point. I was at the county jail then, and it didn’t seem like a big deal. That’s when it was first happening, and then I guess stuff happened again after the non-indictment, and I think that’s when it became a really big thing in here [at the state pris-

on] and that's when I started hearing people talk about it, like in the chow hall and stuff.

## *2. How did you react?*

I was kicking myself that I came to prison just as this was happening! And then I was trying to figure out how to take advantage of it in the situation I was in. And so you know I was just, just trying to — for part of that time I was being processed in the diagnostic prison. And there was like no communication out of there, just letters and stuff. The major feeling at the time was just that I was missing out on something. Oh, and really wanting to urge people to act in the situation with a mindset that it will end, and with a vision toward how we can get the most out of it while it lasts.

## *3. There were and are a lot of contradictory and conflicting elements to these protests and rebellions. Right-wing media has used coded, racist language*

*blaming “thugs” and “criminals”, while left-wing media and some activists have also at times decried the rioting, blaming it on “outside agitators.” Do you have thoughts on these conflicts over tactics and strategy? Do they resonate with debates going on over resistance inside prisons?*

**One refreshing thing about being in prison is you almost never hear people make moral arguments against militancy or hard tactics. They only ever make tactical arguments against it, and generally not.**

Yeah. You know, one refreshing thing about being in prison is you almost never hear people make moral arguments against militancy or hard tactics. They only ever make tactical arguments against it, and generally not. You're more

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likely to hear, "Yeah we can fight back, but we should do it together" than, "We shouldn't fight back." So that's nice. But yeah I do have feelings about these arguments. I was

**And I could say that white people need to stand up with them in order to start a culture of cooperation between us, and that's the only thing that will allow us to beat them. And that resonated with a lot of people I think.**

actually thinking today, remembering something like a chief of police, I think during Baltimore, that "police were the last line of defense against the savages", referring to the rioters in Baltimore as savages. And of course, that's a really loaded, clearly racist terminology and has a strong connection to a long racist history. And

that's the sort of sentiment that I often hear in here, that "this is how police look at us [Black people]." And unfortunately there's also the sentiment, that's probably true, that "that's how most white people look at us."

*4. Were other prisoners talking about these rebellions, and if so, what kinds of conversations were they having?: Did it stimulate discussion, organizing, and/or resistance in your facility? Did it feel to you like there was a racial dynamic to how prisoners reacted to the news of these mostly Black uprisings? Was there more or less racial unity with regards to anti-police sentiment in the prison? Did it seem like white or Latino/a prisoners could relate?*

Definitely, yeah. So, I kinda went into that with my last answer, but I'll go more into it. It of course stimulated conversation, but here, I think, not in the way your question hopes for. It didn't stimulate organizing, or at least not that I was privy to. But it gave me a chance to like, I don't know if it's

just Georgia or prison in general...like, I've lived in Atlanta my whole life, which is very different than the rest of Georgia, and I didn't realize until I came to prison how 'country' Georgia is, and how racist white people in Georgia are. And like...old school racist, you know?

And so, people rightfully assume that if you're white you're probably racist. So, in a way it gave me a good opportunity to make it clear that I'm not that to a lot of people. And then also to confront racist ideas by using...OK, so, certain white prisoners would be against the riots just because they were Black people doing it, but then I could easily say to them that Black people are standing up and fighting the police, and they should be commended for that. You know because almost everyone in prison hates the police. And I could say that white people need to stand up with them in order to start a culture of cooperation between us, and that's the only thing that will allow us to beat them. And that resonated with a lot of people I think even more than the very deeply ingrained, reactive, racist responses that were happening.

*5. What do you think the relationship can or should be between these anti-police rebellions on the outside and resistance inside prisons? Is there resistance or organizing going on at your facility you want to mention or hold up?*

Yeah, absolutely they should be connected. Like, the uprisings and the riots and stuff are only the beginning. And these things [police and prison] are so interconnected that there's no reason they shouldn't overlap. The sort of, organizational bonds that these riots and uprisings give us the opportunity to form are the necessary precondition to start sending in what's necessary to agitate and build up... Like, there's an underlying level of resistance in all pris-

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oners, because prison accepts and admits that it's at war with prisoners, whereas society doesn't admit that it's at war with those within it.

OK, so just to get concrete, I think it'd be great to see the bonds and the groupings that are being made and formed from uprisings on the outside, during lulls on the outside these shouldn't be breaking apart but should be trying to spread their organizational tactics, which is really what's lacking in prison, to the inside. Send literature, different

**If we can start a culture of this type of coordination that goes beyond the prison wall, so that people on the street are coordinating with people in prison, I think that's the necessary precondition to make sure that when we storm the bastille, we're storming all the bastilles.**

agitational materials. Eventually there will have to be a level of coordination like, in places like Alabama and California, and probably other prisons in Georgia, I know there's a lot of coordination and organization going into a lot of these hunger strikes and riots that are happening. So if we can start a culture of this type of coordination that goes beyond the prison wall, so that people on the street are coordinating with people in prison,

I think that's the necessary precondition to make sure that when we storm the bastille, we're storming all the bastilles. That when there's a large enough prison revolt, there will be support on the outside strong enough to actually tear down these walls.